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ABSTRACT

A program with the major goal of achieving effective collaboration between public school personnel and university personnel in the preparation of physical education teachers is described. This program consists of two segments--a block of courses carrying semester credit hours and a student teaching supervision option. University personnel work cooperatively with public school teachers in field experience programs under a system that allows a maximum of input from the student teacher. All participants in the program attend joint seminars and workshops. Decision making by the group allows the program to be responsive to the changing needs and interests of students as they begin studying the teaching process. Students work toward their own goals as they study the teaching process and receive feedback from many sources as they develop and test their teaching beliefs and styles. Public school and university teacher roles are clearly defined with different although interdependent responsibilities in the preparation of teachers. (JD)

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AN EXPERIMENTAL TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAM

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An alternative professional preparation program at The University of Michigan has been developing over the past seven years. It originated with a concern for the differences between teacher education programs and public school practices. Student teachers and beginning teachers seemed to blend into the field, maintaining a status quo, rather than improving programs by making use of the skills and knowledges they had learned in their professional preparation programs. Not only did university personnel seem to have minimal impact on beginning professionals, but communication and collaboration with tenured public school teachers seemed almost nonexistent. The stereo type of the ivory tower professor knowing all the answers and the public school teacher rejecting the idealistic theories seemed more true than false. Notice this premise is demonstrated in my opening statements; the implicit belief was that public school programs should change in the direction advocated by teacher educators.

It seemed obvious that communication between public school and university teachers was necessary as an initial step toward bringing about change in school programs. This first step has led to a major goal of the program today, the collaborative involvement of public school personnel in the preparation of physical education teachers. Progress toward this goal has been congruent

with a change from teaching the prospective teacher the best way to teach, to helping the prospective teacher explore teaching behaviors as a means of finding their best way to teach. Public school teachers become essential to helping students explore a variety of teaching beliefs and practices. Differences in teaching behaviors are valued rather than evaluated, thereby removing one of the major obstacles to significant relationships between university and public school teachers.

Every teacher decides to be a particular kind of teacher. Sometimes this decision is based on the teacher's personal experiences as a student, without ever being examined in terms of the impact on different kinds of students. Professional preparation experiences are important in helping students consider altenatives from a perspective wider than past personal experience. Collaboration of public school and university personnel is essential if students are to be exposed to many different school environments and teaching behaviors. The opportunity to try out teaching behaviors in these different environments provides each student with personal teaching experiences, which become a foundation for testing their beliefs about teaching. Not only do public school teachers provide numerous and varied teacher models, they provide students access to the real world for developing their teaching behaviors. If

students are to determine the kind of teacher they will be, they need the maximum freedom possible to try out ideas important to them at the time. The program model has become one with a triangular relationship between students, public school and university teachers. These interdependent groups each contribute their particular expertise to their mutual benefit.

A problem in implementation of this model is differential power between the three groups. Real power differences do exist between students and teachers. This power can be used to produce compliant student behaviors. If both public school and university teachers use power in this way, student energies are directed toward adjusting to changing expectations. Students learn successful teachers are those who please their supervisors. Unfortunately, expectations of many supervisors in the real world are minimal and frequently center around adequate control of students. Beyond that, the beginning teacher still has to define his or her teaching self. The usual resources available to the beginning teacher are their personal past experiences and the current practices of colleagues. It is not surprising, then, that past practices tend to be perpetuated without undergoing critical examination of their implications in the changing climate of today.

The power differential between public school and university persons may be defined behaviorally. University supervisors may act as if they have control in public school settings through behaviors such as evaluating lesson plans of student teachers or using infrequent visitations as a basis for evaluation of the student teacher. An extreme response to this type of behavior produces collusion between the student teacher and the public school teacher to put on a good show for the supervisor. Since the university person has no real power over the public school person, any actions implying superior knowledge causes a self protective response from the public school person. This action and reaction usually destroys any opportunity for effective communication between the two persons. This situation also creates difficulty for the student teacher, frequently resulting in the student teacher identifying with only one person thereby losing the opportunity to benefit from the other. In this interdependent model, real power differences are defined to maximize the individual freedom of the student in relation to both the university and public school personnel. The roles of each group are defined in terms of their contributions, with differences identified, explored and valued.

To understand how these ideas are implemented in our work with public school teachers, a description of the total program is necessary. The alternative professional preparation program consists of two segments: first, a block of courses carrying thirteen semester credit hours and second, a student teaching supervision option. All individuals voluntarily participate in either or both parts of the program.

The block program includes elementary and secondary methods of teaching physical education, curriculum, educational psychology and pre-student teaching field experiences. The group meets from nine to twelve, four mornings a week. In addition, students individually arrange to work sixty hours in public school settings. We are fortunate to have an abundance of human resources involved in the program. Twenty to twenty five students register for the thirteen credit hour program. Students who have previously completed the program may register for one credit hour of independent study to serve as senior consultants. We usually have three or four doctoral students in physical education participate as staff members. These students are either paid teaching assistants or received credit for field work. One educational psychology teaching assistant and one physical education faculty member complete the group that meets regularly in the university classroom. Approximately twenty five public school physical educators participate in the program field work component. Approximately half of this teacher group attend two seminars

planned by students during the term. A detailed description of this component will follow a brief overview of the classroom experiences of the group.

At the beginning of the term, the staff assumes responsibility for conducting interpersonal skill training sessions on active listening, giving feedback, observing groups and group participation skills. These skills are emphasized as the group determines content and makes decisions on organizational and accountability procedures. Proposed topics for class periods are listed by individuals and used as a basis for the selection of topics for the following two weeks of class. These decisions are usually arrived at by consensus of the total group. After topics are determined, students and staff select areas of interest and serve as the planning committee for that particular class period. There is the expectation that each student will serve on one planning committee during each two week cycle. This process allows the program to be responsive to the changing needs and interests of students as they begin studying the teaching process. The consensus model of decision making seems to promote the group's ability to meet the differing needs of individuals within the group. The planning committee structure provides each individual an opportunity to plan learning activities, to implement those plans, and to solicit feedback for use in evaluating those efforts. Students also frequently identify these small group

experiences with staff members as significant sources of personal learnings.

Learning experiences designed for class time include the use of simulations, role plays, educational gaming, physical activities, microteaching, video tapes and taping, films, discussion groups and individual skill practice in such things as writing behavioral objectives. Lectures are utilized infrequently and then are seldom longer than twenty minutes. These instructional strategies are designed to heighten individual awareness of sensitive issues such as racism and sexism, to develop specific teaching skills such as writing behavioral objectives and planning lessons with an understanding of the philosophical and theoretical foundations, and to develop interpersonal skills that will facilitate relating effectively to a variety of kinds of people. Throughout the program the student is exploring and analyzing attitudes, issues, theories, philosophies, and skills as they begin to define themselves as teachers.

The concurrent fieldwork program component puts students in touch with the reality of the schools, thus giving direction to the classwork component of the program. The first part of the term, students observe and assist in routine class procedures. Students are responsible for making individual arrangements within the group of twnety five public school teachers. The goal of this part of the fieldwork is to become familiar with a wide variety of

school environments and teacher models. Student understanding of each teachers point of view and rational for adoption of particular teaching practices is encouraged in class discussions. The breadth of this experience helps students identify environments where they are most comfortable. Personal discomfort sometimes stimulates introspective analysis of the source of that discomfort. Differences between teachers are identified by teachers and students alike and valued by both as a vehicle for meeting the individual needs of students. This climate has been particularly valuable to me in my role as a university teacher. My beliefs are identified as just that, my personal position. I hope students consider my position as I hope they consider the position of each teacher involved in the program. Over the past several years I feel many teachers are taking a stronger advocacy role for their particular point of view. Not only does this benefit our students as they study teaching, it has led to some exciting discussions which seem to have been professionally stimulating to all participants.

The second half of the term, students implement projects in the public schools. Teachers submit requests for special assistance for which students may volunteer. Students also may approach particular teachers requesting permission to implement a particular project. A few examples of these projects are planning and implementing an elementary

school "new games" day, teaching a series of lessons to a special interest group of students, working with individuals who have specific learning problems, assessing student abilities, piloting instructional materials. These projects provide real services to teachers as well as providing students with a teaching experience that results in feedback on their effectiveness. Each student tends to have several different projects allowing them reactions from different teachers and different kinds of students. Because students make their own arrangements, they have considerable freedom to make the experience personally relevant.

The third component of the program is the individual preparation time, usually accounted for through papers and/or examinations. The alternative program does not use examinations because they would erode the students freedom to work toward individual goals. Our accountability system requires each student to produce evidence of outside learning experiences. This evidence is presented alternate weeks in small groups that include one staff member. The group is responsible for giving descriptive feedback to each other. The groups change each time giving students an opportunity to interact with a variety of people. One significant outcome of this process is learning to work with peers in a mutual growth relationship. I feel this is

a much needed skill in the development of the professional educator.

In summarizing the block program, I would like to reemphasize how it facilitates collaboration between university and public school teachers in the preparation of physical educators. Students determine class time topics as well as planning and implementing the lesson. Students schedule their own field work experiences selecting from a wide variety of school environments and teacher models. Students are responsible for determining areas to pursue in their study time outside of class. The field work experiences of students are facilitated by public school personnel and give direction to the selection of learning experiences for the university classroom. In all of these experiences, students receive feedback from both peers and teachers.

The second segment of the alternative professional preparation program is a student teaching supervision option. The purpose of this option is to clearly define the public school teacher as the person responsible for the student teachers' experience in the school. Student teacher/cooperating teacher pairs elect to substitute a seminar for the automatic on-site visitation of a university supervisor. The university person serves as a resource to both the student teacher and cooperating teacher. Site visitation too often carries the feeling of

coming out to see what's happening, causing power to become an issue either through direct behaviors of the supervisors or through public school teachers attributing power to the university supervisor. The seminar structure provides a forum for interaction between the three groups, student teachers, cooperative teachers and a university supervisor. The seminar group meets on alternate weeks in the evening throughout the term. The group decides on the seminar topics and responsibility for specific planning is rotated around to different student teacher-cooperating teacher pairs. The university person is a participant in the group and also is responsible for locating and/or preparing materials needed by the planning teams. The university person is also available as a resource to any seminar participant. Seminars provide many opportunities for student teachers to share significant experiences they are having as well as giving cooperating teachers an opportunity to share ideas about their roles. Past examples of seminar topics are: 1) development of guidelines for the orientation of student teachers, 2) compilation of unique activities for elementary school children, 3) a philosophical discussion defining the physically educated student, 4) an awareness training session on dealing with conflict, 5) sharing video tapes they have made of themselves teaching. Regardless of the topics selected, the group loves to talk and the sessions tend to be relaxed

and informal.

Each term the university person makes a variety of assessment instruments available to the group. One of the most positively received instruments centers on expectations of the student teacher-cooperating teacher relationship. The check list solicits responses to expectations about such things as getting and giving feedback, sharing personal joys and concerns, attending professional activities together, socializing together, and visiting in each others' homes. Other scales assess preferences for teaching styles, classroom environments, teaching beliefs and practices. There are no total scores on any of the instruments and no right or wrong answers. These instruments are designed to stimulate descussion between the cooperating teacher and the student teacher. Every once in a while a pair has such a good personal experience using one of the scales, they suggest all seminar participants also complete the instrument as preparation for follow-up activities during the next seminar.

Participant evaluation of the seminar emphasizes its value in promoting significant communication between the student teacher and cooperating teacher. Participants also value the seminar as a support group. One teacher described values derived from the seminar by writing, "Feeling of belonging to a group with similar needs and goals in an environment of learning and interaction." A

student described a similar reaction by writing, "I get some feeling of not being alone feeling the way I do."

Problems encountered in the development of this seminar seem to me to center around the power issue I mentioned earlier. When things didn't go smoothly, participants would look to the university person rather than assume personal responsibility for what was happening in the group. Since it was a change of role for the university person also, personal discomfort and uncertainty of roles seemed to exaggerate the problems. Initially some public school teachers did not view the seminar as helpful to student teachers unless the student teachers were asking for answers from the public school people. Happily, these perceptions of power differentials seem to be diminishing rapidly.

The seminar option of the program has clarified and differentiated responsibilities of public school and university supervisors. Students and teachers continue to elect the seminar option and describe the experience as worthwhile.

An assessment of the total program impact was conducted last year. A questionnaire was designed to assess the quality of the student teacher-cooperating teacher relationship, to describe the scope and frequency of discussion topics and social interactions. When contrasting the four program groups, there wer no differences in the

quality of the relationship. There were significant differences in the scope and frequency of discussion topics. Students who had been in both the block and the seminar programs reported significantly more frequent discussions. An interesting extension of these findings is in the responses to the item measuring satisfaction with the amount of discussion time available. Those who were not in either block or seminar were the only students that indicated they had had adequate discussion time. Similarly in social activities, the groups did report significant differences in frequency of participation. Students who elected both the seminar and the block programs had the highest frequencies of social activities and students who were not in either program had the lowest frequencies. These quantitative data appear to support the participant evaluations that the seminars and the block program provided a stimulus for more frequent discussions, more diverse discussion topics and social interactions.

At this point in the development of the program, several goals; have been accomplished:

1. Students work toward their own goals as they study the teaching process.
2. Students receive feedback from many sources as they develop and test out their particular teaching beliefs and styles.

3. Public school and university teacher roles are more clearly defined with different although interdependent responsibilities in the preparation of teachers.

Students and public school teachers appear to feel the program is beneficial as they continue to elect to participate in it. We seem to be slowly progressing toward an ideal model where public school, university and prospective teachers work collaboratively to improve programs to the ultimately benefit of students in physical education classes.